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ABSTRACT

This booklet is part of a series that was designed to serve as a resource for high school leaders. The volume focuses on the education leader's role in change and contains practical strategies, procedures, and ideas to enable school leaders to plan and implement programs that will help students. It highlights the findings in the National Association of Secondary School Principals' publication, "Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution." The booklet describes the Breaking Ranks program, which emphasizes the belief that students can learn better in a personalized learning environment, and it details strategies for achieving this goal. Intended as a how-to manual, the volume outlines the 10 steps for implementing change: (1) defining the purpose, future, and vision of the school; (2) establishing the action planning team; (3) identifying the problem or opportunity; (4) collecting data; (5) defining the rules, roles, relationships, and responsibilities of stakeholders; (6) reviewing the research; (7) developing the action plan; (8) assessing the conditions for change; (9) operationalizing the action plan; and (10) reporting the results. Each step features a series of questions to help leaders formulate each step of the program. The plan encourages principals to focus their efforts on severing the subservient dependence that students feel toward school officials, teachers, and the various stakeholder groups. (Contains 16 references.) (RJM)

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NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF HIGH SCHOOLS
BREAKING RANKS: MAKING IT HAPPEN

THE EDUCATION LEADER'S ROLE IN CHANGE:

HOW TO PROCEED

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Introduction to the Series

The "Making It Happen" series was developed by the National Alliance of High Schools Advisory Council to serve as a resource for high school leaders. The contents are recommended practical strategies, procedures, and ideas to enable school leaders to successfully plan and implement programs that will provide opportunities for students to be adequately prepared for the 21st Century.

Topics have been selected for this series by the NAHS Advisory Council from among the range of recommendations, themes, and programs discussed in *Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution*.

The "how to implement" strategies are designed to provide clear and concise procedures for successful implementation and outcomes in your school improvement plan. The strategies are based on research and also "best practices" of current schools.

The Council welcomes input regarding additional programs that support the recommendations and themes cited in *Breaking Ranks*.

L. Dean Webb is editor for the "Making It Happen" Series.

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The Education Leader's Role in Change: How To Proceed

Breaking Ranks: Changing an American Institution has the potential to do for high schools what *Turning Points* did for middle level education—change an American institution. However, while middle schools have been able to establish their own unique identities, completely different from their junior high school forerunners, the American high school must continue to serve as the interface between formal secondary education and the diverse range of options available in post-secondary education and careers.

Herein lies the difficulty in attempting to bring about reform at the high school level: while people want to improve the education students receive, there is a great deal of reluctance to change the industrialized model of schooling that has served not only as the gateway from adolescence to adulthood, but also as a means of standardizing, selecting, and sorting the students who complete high schools.

This dichotomy of thought, that we should improve high school education but not change the basic structure of the educational process, is even more perplexing when you realize that high schools are hard pressed to define what the intended result—the educated student—looks like. Most high school officials are not able to describe in holistic terms what a graduate knows and is able to do, but they can tell you what the student "took," how many credits the student earned, and what student did it best.

Breaking Ranks embodies the belief that in a personalized learning environment, all students can learn and that our public schools exist to educate all students. The themes and recommendations contained in *Breaking Ranks* can serve as the basis for an action plan to redefine the American high school. It provides administrators, teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholder groups with opportunities to define and redefine the rules, roles, relationships, results, responsibilities, resources, and research necessary to change the American high school. In a *Breaking Ranks* school, students are the focus of all activities and they all become active learners.

Breaking Ranks recognizes that lifelong learning, the ability to continue to learn in an ever-changing world, is a requisite skill in an information and knowledge society. To achieve this end requires a belief in lifelong learning. It also recognizes that students must learn to work alone and in groups to gather, examine, manipulate, evaluate, and apply information, and that the existing content and teacher-driven curriculum must also to be reviewed and redirected toward a student-centered curriculum where students become more accountable for their own learning.

To attain these goals, *Breaking Ranks* schools must focus their efforts on curriculum reform. Such reform should not be confined to merely another paper exercise. It should be a plan that will lead to the development and implementation of a curriculum that is integrated and coherent, that infuses technology as a tool for learning and that focuses on the student as an active learner, rather than as a passive receptor of information. This will require educators to replace the existing fragmented patchwork of courses, compartmentalized into separate disciplines, with a dynamic and ever-evolving integrated curriculum.

Combined with this new vision of the student-learner and of the curriculum, is the recog-

nition that student assessment will need to be reformed so it comes to mean more than just student scores on batteries of pencil-and-paper tests. If students are to develop skills that will allow them to become independent learners in an information age, they must be allowed to exhibit their learning by applying it in an authentic forum.

Breaking Ranks also presents a new concept of the teacher as a pedagogical and disciplinary resource, coach, and mentor. The development of such a teacher will require ongoing professional development.

Finally, *Breaking Ranks* holds forth the promise that if provided with the necessary resources to implement a shared educational vision, the members of the educational community at an American high school can and will prepare their clients, the students, for a productive membership in the increasingly pluralistic and global society of the twenty-first century. The plan to restructure the curriculum and the academic school day outlined in *Breaking Ranks* can provide an operational framework to implement this vision.

How should educators proceed? A vision of what a change will bring is one thing and making it a reality is quite another. Those who attempt to initiate substantive change may be attacked with enthusiasm by opponents, who will base their objections on the reality and fears of the day. Supporters will be armed only with the potential of what could be.

Making vision reality requires leadership and a willingness to step beyond those educational beliefs and practices that have left schools mired in the past. That the principal will be the key individual, if not the primary catalyst, in implementing the recommendations identified in *Breaking Ranks* is certain. Principals who take on this task will need to take a close look at their present beliefs and practices. They will need to be willing to risk the present to discover the potential of the future, to recognize that excellence is not a state of being, but rather a state of becoming. They will need to envision possibilities not yet actualized, but which can and will be achieved. Above all, they must be able to enlighten all the members of the educational community that surrounds and embodies the high school. They will need to help key stakeholders see that it is not just the vision of a few that is to be achieved, but a common vision, born of the desires and the activities of everyone associated with the school.

Implementing Change

While no single process for implementing the recommendations of *Breaking Ranks* is appropriate for all schools, this monograph presents one strategy that has been proven successful in implementing change in a number of schools. The approach consists of 10 steps and a series of questions related to each step. The questions are designed for reflection and may serve to generate additional questions that will help focus on implementation plans for a particular school. The principal must constantly seek to answer all questions and to infuse the answers into the action and implementation plans.

Step 1—Defining the Purpose, Future, and Vision of the School

As principals and their site-based teams begin to think about *Breaking Ranks* and what they want to achieve, the primary focus of their efforts should be on improving student services. They should also consider that any changes they may wish to implement will need to be adapted to fit their particular school, to be aligned with the statement of purpose and expectations of that school, and to meet the expectations of the community at large.

Before proceeding with any type of change or reform project and throughout the change process, it is necessary to constantly assess where you are in relation to your destination. To determine what needs to be done to reach that destination, educational leaders must address several crucial questions.

The first set of questions involves *purpose:* What is the fundamental purpose of schools? What are their reasons for being? What is it that schools do?

The second set of questions involves the *future:* While you cannot be sure what the future will bring, you certainly should look at the current reality as well as trends that will allow you to think about and project into the future.

- If you continue on your present course, what will your school be like five years from now? Ten years from now?
- Will your school be able to fulfill its fundamental purpose in the society of the future?

To answer these questions, look at the ingrained patterns of beliefs, values, and traditions formed over the history of your school—the very *culture of the school* itself. The culture of a society is an historically rooted, socially transmitted set of deep patterns of thinking and ways of acting that give meaning to human experience. These patterns unconsciously dictate how we see, assess, and act upon our experiences. Schools tend to be microcosms of the expectations a society has for its children and are the organizations by which society creates the conditions for its perpetuation. This reality also makes schools extremely hard to change, even if the society from which they emanate is changing.

At the same time you are considering the culture of the school, you need to look at changes in the culture of the United States, such as the changing demographics of this country (i.e., the aging of the population, the diversification of the family unit, and the transition from a nation *with* minorities to a nation *of* minorities), the transition in the economic base of the United States (i.e. from the durable goods of the industrial age to the entrepreneurial services of the post-industrial age), and the impact of technology on all aspects of our lives, on all aspects of teaching, and on all aspects of learning.

Clearly, the cultural environment in which today's schools and the schools of the foreseeable future can be described, in part, is as an information society. And, in an information society, knowledge fuels the economy and shapes society. Therefore, all high school students will need to be taught how to determine what information they need, how to find it, and how to use it. They also need to be able to envision the interconnectedness of everything in the history and future of human experience.

The final set of questions asks what schools must do today and tomorrow to function the way educators envision them functioning 10 years from now. Change will not occur unless school leaders have a vision of what ought to be and the belief that it is realizable with the help of others. Your vision will need to be an acute sense of what you believe is possible in your school. It should be based on your sound educational perspective, your experience, your expectations, an accurate perception of the present situation, and the values you espouse and demonstrate in your day-to-day work. A clearly articulated vision also provides the stakeholders with a picture of the future that will clarify the general direction for change, that will motivate people to take action in the right direction, and that will help coordinate the actions of various people.

The questions presented in Table 1 will help focus attention on defining the purpose, future direction, and vision of the school.

Table 1: Questions Related to the Purpose, Future, and Vision of the School

What is the fundamental purpose of schools?

What values, beliefs, and norms exist at your school?

What changes in the culture of your school and the society it serves will have the greatest impact on its future?

If you continue on your present course, what will your school be like 5 and 10 years from now?

What must your school do today and tomorrow to function the way you envision it functioning years from now?

Step 2 - Establishing the Action Planning Team

Implementing and sustaining change in a high school requires leadership and the collective efforts of a number of individuals. Because education is a people-oriented profession, and because teachers are the primary agents in the school for implementing the educational instruction, as well as any proposed changes within the school, they must be an integral part of the change process. Therefore, one of the first steps is to select an action planning team.

Reflect on the nature of the change(s) you envision, on the optimal number of team members needed to make the vision a reality, and the principal's primary function as part of the team dynamics. The team will need to include enough key stakeholders so those who are not part of the team cannot easily block the progress of the change efforts. The collective team membership should possess the expertise to make informed and intelligent decisions, the credibility to be taken seriously by other stakeholders, and the leadership to drive the change process.

As the primary catalyst for change, the educational leader should consider a number of factors when putting together the action team. The dynamic interactions between the members of the team and the interactions between the team and the various stakeholders associated with the school will be key to the success of any initiative.

Look at the individual characteristics of potential team members, at their past performances in a variety of settings, and the potential for new achievements. The organizational and task-orientation skills and abilities are certainly desirable characteristics to consider when establishing the action team. As the leader of this team, whether formally or in an *ex officio* capacity, the principal should attempt to bring together individuals who collectively posses the types of organizational and analytical skills and abilities that will allow them to achieve the desired outcomes. They should draw upon the diversity of talent, the variety of experiences, and the potential inherent within the members of the team.

Also consider that the educational and change processes are human endeavors. Therefore, the interpersonal qualities of the action team members may be as important as their task orientation. Sensitivity to the perspectives of others along with an understanding of the underlying attitudes, beliefs, and values that

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are the basis for a particular perspective will be important to reaching consensus. Including people on a team who are sensitive to the needs, the wants, and the direction of others can help individuals modify and adapt a particular position to achieve the shared vision.

The extent to which team members' individual skills and competencies complement one another determines the range of perspectives that the administrator and the team will be able to deal with successfully. Establishing such a team, creating a bond of trust, and developing a shared vision that is both sensible and appealing, increases the potential for successful implementation of the action plan. The questions posed in Table 2 can serve as a guide to selecting individuals to serve on the action planning team.

Develop a plan that is both flexible and adaptable to take advantage of the individual and collective strengths while avoiding the shortcomings as much as possible. At the same time, keep a clear vision of what is to be achieved and help the members of the team develop the skills and abilities necessary to make the vision a reality.

Step 3 - Identifying the Problem or Opportunity

Once selected, the action planning team will put individual and group leadership skills to the test. The first task will be to identify very generally what you and your team think should be addressed. At this time, you and your team may want to consider the six main themes of *Breaking Ranks*—personalization, coherency, time, technology, professional development, and leadership—as the starting point in your deliberations. Keep in mind that school improvement efforts take time. In addition, do not attempt too many initiatives at one time and recognize that early successes with your initiatives will be important to sustaining on-going efforts.

Present any intervention from the perspective that this is an opportunity to improve stu-

Table 2: Questions To Ask When Establishing the Action Planning Team

How many people should be on your team?

What stakeholder groups should be represented on your team?

How much authority will be vested, individually and collectively, in your team?

What resources will be made available to your team?

Have you established an action planning team that possesses organizational skills?

Have you established an action planning team that possesses good communication skills?

How much authority will be vested, individually and collectively, in your team?

Have you established an action planning team that is task oriented?

Have you established an action planning team that possesses good interpersonal qualities?

dent learning. Regardless of their individual perspectives, all key stakeholders will agree that their primary goal is to improve the services provided for students. However, they may differ in their opinions about how to achieve this end. In fact, they may range from the point of view that their high school presently represents the best of all possible worlds, to the doom and gloom point of view that you should throw the educators out with their workbooks and start over. Regardless of the school, reality probably lies somewhere between those two extreme points of view. Whether you choose to view your intervention as a problem solving effort or as an opportunity to improve some aspect of the school to foster student learning, you will need to bridge the gap between what is—the empirical—and what should be—the normative.

Public polls consistently indicate that people believe the improvement of education is and should continue to be a national priority, but that their local high school is doing a good job of educating its students. Thus, if you expect to gain support for your change initiatives, you will need to provide data that illustrates that the school can do a better job for its students.

Formulate a statement of what you hope to achieve; describe the situation in the school environment that will be addressed by your efforts. If you are hoping to rectify a problem, indicate what it is that is wrong that you intend to set right. If the intervention is seen as an opportunity to improve some aspect of the school operation, frame the opportunity in the form of question(s). In either case, reducing your thoughts to a readable and persuasive document will force you to organize your thoughts.

Since you will ultimately be required to present your action plan to a variety of audiences, you may want to develop an introductory statement and then list the questions(s) that will be addressed in your action plan. You should be able to state the problem or opportunity in one or two sentences. If you have trouble doing this, don't go any further. There is a strong possibility that you have not crystallized the focus of your efforts. You should also ask yourself: Is this is really a serious problem or good opportunity? Even if it is serious or good, are you likely to be able to do anything about it? If your answer to either of these questions is "no," find another opportunity. The questions in Table 3 might help you identify the problem or opportunity.

Table 3: Questions To Ask When Identifying the Problem or Opportunity

Have you clearly stated a problem or opportunity?

Why is this a problem or opportunity?

Is it really a serious problem or good opportunity?

Is the intervention within your sphere of influence?

Can your efforts make a practical difference in student learning?

Step 4 - Collecting Data

Once you have identified a problem or opportunity, you should attempt to gather infor-

mation from the school setting to support your efforts. Keep in mind that while the data you gather can be valid from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective, they can also be risky from a political perspective. If your data yields information that is sensitive, you should be committed with regard to the initiative you will propose. Before proceeding, you will need to consider the short and the long-range ramifications if you use all the available data and consider whether you are prepared to articulate a conclusion regardless of how popular or unpopular it might be.

The collection of background data should focus on establishing a database that may be quantitative or qualitative or both. If you are using quantified data, you should focus on data that are related to the problem statement or question(s) being considered for the intervention. Do not bother to collect data that are not related to the situation. To place your efforts in perspective, consider the history, the demographics, and the geography of your setting or the situation leading to the development of an action plan. The following three areas should be considered:

- Look for discrepancy data related to the problem (e.g. trend data that shows the situation has been occurring for a period of time). Review any data that show the measurable difference between the present situation and the desired state.
- Review any data that show the impact of the problem on the entire educational enterprise in your setting (i.e. poor reading skills will have an adverse impact on student learning in virtually all curricular areas).
- Attempt to uncover possible causal data regarding factors in the setting that could possibly cause the discrepancy(ies). This type of data may be evident in your school or may be suggested by the literature (i.e. research that supports what you have identified in your setting). In either case the data will need to be current and relevant to the intervention being proposed.

Next, begin to summarize the data in a way that can readily be understood by the variety of audiences who will want to know why are you proposing changes. This may be especially true if you have been attempting to counter strong criticisms of education with a positive public relations program. The summary of the data

Table 4: Questions Relative to Data Collection

Have you focused your data collection activities on those data that are directly related to the problem or opportunity being considered?

Have you presented data that there is a discrepancy between what is and what should be?

Have you established a significant enough discrepancy to warrant the intervention?

Have the data been summarized in a way that can be understood by a variety of audiences?

Do the results of the data analysis form the basis of your argument for developing an action plan?

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should be written so it readily identifies causes that have contributed to the problem or opportunity area in the school setting. These data statements form the basis of the research for the action plan.

Developmentally, the summary should begin to form, at the conceptual level, the basis of your argument for developing an action plan. In essence, the summary should succinctly answer the question of "why" you are engaged in the intervention. It should convey an urgent belief that something has to be done and it will need to be conveyed with passion. The questions presented in Table 1 will help you in the data collection process.

Step 5 - Defining the Rules, Roles, Relationships and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

At this juncture, you and your team should begin to search for answers and consider the conceptual development of a specific action plan. However, you will need to do more than just develop a plan. You will also need to consider how change occurs or can occur within a particular school and the nature of the school setting. This, in turn, requires a definition and understanding of the rules, roles, relationships, and responsibilities of the various stakeholders.

In considering the school setting, you should attempt to describe comprehensively the context in which the intervention will be implemented. All too often, we fail to analyze what we think we already know and we take for granted something that is unfounded in fact. Then, we find ourselves surprised at some point down the road. Therefore we must consider the relevant characteristics of the school, the school system, and the community in which the school exists.

Describe the school in terms of demographics, organizational characteristics, and culture. The demographic and organizational data should focus on the culture and history of the school site, school system, and the community it serves. These data will need to be related directly to the problem statement or research question(s) proposed.

From the cultural perspective, certain internal and external influences will have a potential impact on your planned intervention(s). Identify any influences or factors that may contribute to the success or failure of your efforts. Considering these influences will require you to identify the following:

- What the influence is
- How the influence affects the school setting
- Whether you consider the influence positive or negative to the setting and why.

Since so many factors can affect a school you should establish a systematic procedure for analyzing these influences. To gain a better understanding of the various factors, look at the rules, the roles, the relationships, and the responsibilities of the various stakeholders in the school community.

The *rules* are generally organized as the formal and informal policies from the school district level down to the classroom level, as well as district contractual agreements. Within any organization, there are the formal rules—those that are written and formally adopted—and the informal rules—those that govern the way things get done. Review the rules to determine which need to be more formally adhered to and which need to be revised or eliminated. Which rules will potentially foster the successful completion of a particular intervention? Which rules will potentially impede the successful completion of the intervention?

If you recognize that the existing rules might prevent your plan from achieving success, you will need to decide how to deal with the existing rules. You may want to create new poli-

cies that will enable you and your team to achieve the desired ends. However, you should proceed cautiously when developing new rules. Generally, rules are more restrictive than enabling.

While the rules govern the actions of people, their respective *roles*, again both formal and informal, define the way an individual acts and functions within the system and the school. Implicit in the roles are the expectations for all persons occupying a given position in the social order as they deal with other people. The roles within a school will be both positional and situational (different individuals who occupy the same position on the traditional hierarchical organizational chart will function differently in different situations).

Look for the formal and the informal leadership characteristics among individuals. Who makes things happen? Who gets things done? Under what circumstances? In what situations? It is important to recognize who does what, where, when, why, and how. It is also important to identify where the roadblocks or bottlenecks are with regard to the different roles and within the different levels of bureaucracy.

Getting things done within a school requires people to interact with one another. *Relationships* are the interpersonal interactions that produce outcomes within the system and school setting. In the operation of a school, a social relationship exists when, as a result of a common focus, one person's behavior elicits a dependable and expected response from another person. The extent to which similar responses tend to follow particular requests is an indication of the effectiveness of the relationship. Again, relationships will be both formal and informal. Reflect on the various relationships between individuals and between groups of individuals within the school. Understanding the

Table 5: Questions Related to Rules, Roles, Relationships, and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Have you reviewed the rules governing the operation of the school?

Have you identified the demographics of your work setting?

Have you identified the organizational characteristics of your work setting?

Have you identified the various elements and working relationships within the culture of your work setting?

How do decisions get made in your school?

Have you identified the responsibilities for implementing the intervention?

Are the responsibilities within the sphere of influence of the people who will be assigned a particular task?

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relationships within a school is important in identifying the culture of a school. In turn, understanding the potential for the various formal and informal relationships to foster or impede your efforts will be valuable to you and your team as you develop an action plan.

The various established relationships within a school and a school system indicate what one might expect when implementing an intervention. However, as you and your team proceed, you will also need to consider the *responsibilities* of individuals. A look at the meaning of the word responsibility—the ability to choose a response, to answer for one's actions or decisions—empowers people to act. Exactly how much responsibility you and your team will have and will be able to give to others during the operational phase of the plan may be governed by existing rules. Table 5 asks the questions of how these rules, roles, relationships, and responsibilities complement one another and will ultimately affect the implementation and the progress of the plan.

Step 6 - Reviewing the Research

As you prepare for the responsibilities associated with change, you should be reasonably sure that the approaches you are contemplating will get you where you want to go. Prior to developing and implementing an intervention, practitioners tend not to review the research surrounding the intervention. Yes, they may read an article or two, attend a conference on the subject, or speak with colleagues who are implementing a new policy or program, but they often do not actually research all aspects of the intervention as it relates to student learning and their particular school.

Therefore, before you begin any implementation you and your team should conduct a thorough review of the literature to determine if someone has already answered the question(s) or implemented the basic opportunity that you are interested in, to find out what their experiences have been, and to inform and help crystallize your views on the topic(s). The NASSP Gold File can serve as a starting point for your review (call NASSP at (800) 253-7746 for more information). However, as you search for applicable literature, do not limit your reference base. Read with breadth, read from domains other than just education, read books, read reviews and secondary sources, read preliminary sources, and read research journals.

At the same time, do not read randomly. Rather, consider generating a few key questions about the problem(s) or opportunity to guide

Table 6: Questions Related to Conducting the Review of the Research

Does the review of the literature relate to the problem setting or the opportunities at hand?

Has someone else already answered the question or implemented the opportunity you are interested in?

What were their results or experiences?

Have you generated a set of questions to guide your research?

your inquiry (see Table 6). These questions should be ones that you think may have been addressed in the literature and ones that knowing the answers to will help with the implementation of your problem or opportunity. Remember, you are not reviewing the literature on the problem or the opportunity; you are reviewing the literature that will help you answer the questions you have posed.

Step 7 - Developing the Action Plan

Once the culture of the school has been analyzed and the problem or opportunity in question researched in relationship to that analysis, you and your team should begin to develop an action plan that identifies a number of approaches, strategies, or interventions you will attempt during implementation. The variety of methods employed should be related to your conceptual premise, to the problem setting, and to your research on possible means for solving the problem or addressing your opportunity.

One of the advantages of using this approach will be realized when elements of the plan are challenged. If questioned by those opposed to the plan, you can confidently respond that you will be more than willing to have them review the data you have supporting your position and that you will be more than willing to review their data supporting their position.

At this phase, the problem or opportunity should be tied to the school setting. Developmentally, you will be refining the specific question that is the focus of your intervention and the reasons for expecting a relationship among the components of your plan. Developing the action plan should be in the forefront of your mind and, once developed, should serve as a guide throughout your intervention. This action plan, which is still at the conceptual level at this point, will be based upon your knowledge, your vision, and your experience. It should tie the empirical data and the normative premise with the culture of your work setting.

A major consideration in the development of the action plan is resources. The best developed plan will be of little use if you do not have the necessary resources to implement it. Therefore, you must consider what resources will be required to implement the plan, from the ideal to the minimal amount required. Normally, when individuals speak of the resources available to a school, they refer to the fiscal resources. However, you should also think about the wide range of human resources available to you. Education as a human enterprise is very labor intensive. Your plan will only be able to travel as far as the available human resources will allow.

Fiscal resources, human capital, social capital, and time are available to schools in finite quantities. And, while the quantity of these resources made available is critical, and while school personnel frequently say they do not have enough of these resources, they rarely reflect on how effectively and efficiently they utilize ties as part of your plan. Table 7 poses a number of questions that you should consider as you develop the action plan.

Step 8 - Assessing the Conditions for Change

Before actually implementing the plan, assess the conditions for change within the school and the community at large. Even if your team has established a solid action plan for the intervention, you can run afoul if the conditions for change are not favorable. You must consider that implementation will require taking a conceptual framework and imposing it operationally on a dynamic and varying environment with a diversity of stakeholders, values

Table 7: Questions To Ask Related to Developing an Action Plan

Have you clearly identified the area(s) of change that will occur during the implementation of the plan?

Have you identified potential approaches, strategies, or interventions for your plan?

Have you established a defensible argument for the implementation of a course of action for your plan?

Have you identified the fiscal, human, and social capital necessary to implement the plan?

Are the various resources you have identified realistic in terms of your plan and your school?

Will the various resources be available to you to implement your plan?

and interests, and that, as an organization, the American high school has been conditioned to resist change.

This resistance to change is consistently reinforced by the majority of people who tend to be satisfied with their school, although they generally concede that there may be some aspects of the school that can be improved. Nonetheless, there surely will be questions and resistance from stakeholders other than faculty and staff members. If you are not prepared to respond to these questions, you may seriously impede the progress of your plan.

Remember also, a number of stakeholders, while not necessarily opposed to the plan, may be undecided regarding one or more components. Most of these individuals will be looking for reassurance that the proposed course of action will benefit all students. Therefore, do not take offense to questions posed by opponents. Consider each point carefully. Respond to the stakeholders and make any adjustments that show the potential for improving the plan.

Although the primary focus of the action plan will be the improvement of student learning, the proposed implementation of the plan will affect different stakeholder groups in different ways. Therefore you will need to consider how various individuals and stakeholder groups will be directly or indirectly affected by the intervention and be prepared for some opposition. Not only should you be prepared for opposition, you should not be surprised if some opposition comes from stakeholder groups who have traditionally been supporters. You can almost expect the degree of opposition to be positively correlated to the degree of change you hope to implement.

Also keep in mind that the needs and desires of some groups are well met by the existing system. Previous unsuccessful attempts at change may also predispose some patrons to oppose virtually any plan you propose. And, although your plan may be an attempt to improve the services students are receiving, the stakeholders might reply with the classic line, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!" From this perspective, anticipate where the opposition will come

from and do not take for granted any one group as supporters.

Finally, keep in mind the political reality that policymakers will need to consider input from a variety of sources prior to endorsing any major policy changes. Regardless of how sound a proposal might be from an educational perspective, it would take courage for policymakers to endorse an intervention that has strong opposition from key stakeholder groups.

In the end, the extent to which you and your team consider the conditions for change and utilize the various avenues of communication to get your message out to the various stakeholders will affect the successful implementation of your intervention. Table 8 presents a number of questions that you should consider in assessing the conditions for change. Keep in mind that having good data ready and available for distribution will prove extremely beneficial to your efforts.

Step 9 - Operationalizing the Action Plan

The transition from the conceptual phase to the operational phase will require you and your team to remain focused on the big picture, as well as on the individual components of your action plan, while at the same time preparing to implement the various components and processes of the action plan, describing what interventions will be attempted, and why they are being tried. To this end, your intervention(s) should identify the more global area(s) of change that will occur during your efforts and identify and describe—in clear terms—the expected benefits to be derived from your intervention. You should also develop indicators that your efforts are actually achieving the benefits that have been established. Where feasible, these indicators should be directly related to the quantitative or qualitative data that served as the basis for the intervention.

Table 8: Questions Related to Conditions for Change

What is the prior history of successful change in the school setting?

How satisfied or dissatisfied are people with the current practices?

How congruent is the proposed intervention with existing and educationally sound practices?

Can the proposed intervention be readily observed?

How many people will be affected by the intervention?

How many of the key stakeholders and stakeholder groups are likely to support the intervention?

How many bureaucratic levels will be involved in implementing the intervention?

How many units within the school will be affected by the change?

How many people will be required to carry out the intervention?

How many students will be directly affected by the intervention?

How extensively has the intervention been communicated to the various stakeholder groups?

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A couple of notes of caution should be considered at this time. First, education is a gradual process of development that takes place during a person's lifetime. To expect extensive overnight results is just not realistic. Therefore, project small incremental gains in the established indicators over time. Second, the focus of your efforts must not exceed your personal scope of influence. Do not attempt to implement something that you and your team cannot control from the perspective of the rules, roles, relationships, and resources.

Once the intended goals of your plan have been established, the various strategies that have been adopted to attain these goals need to be broken down into those programs or processes that will be used to implement your approaches, strategies, or interventions. These programs or processes will be the basis for establishing timelines and milestone achievements. The timeline will describe the specific activities you will conduct during the operational phase as you begin implementing your approaches, strategies, or interventions.

Activities should describe what you will attempt to do to close the gap between what is and what the shared vision indicates should be. The timeline should be based on the chronology of the implementation of the program and the processes. Recognize that the timeline will probably need to be revised as the plan is implemented. In addition, indicate how you will actively engage key stakeholders in helping you toward the successful completion of your intervention, and how you will motivate and sustain the efforts of key stakeholders during the entire intervention. You will want all the key stakeholders to feel that they are contributing members of a team effort to improve their school for all students.

As the action plan is implemented, monitor the progress of the activities in the plan. Such monitoring is critical to the ultimate success or failure of the action plan. If you regularly monitor the implementation of the plan, you will be prepared to respond to questions, to adapt the plan where necessary, and to act in a

Table 9: Questions Related to Operationalizing the Action Plan

Did you describe the expected results from the intervention approaches, strategies, or interventions?

Have you clearly stated the approaches, strategies, or interventions that you will use?

Have you established quantifiable results?

Have you established a timeline to measure key activities in your intervention?

Do each of your outcomes identify the target group, establish a measurement indicator, identify a performance standard, and establish a time frame for completion?

Have you established a chronological time frame for the development and implementation of the action plan?

Have you established a means of monitoring the progress of the action plan?

manner that indicates that various turns in the road were expected and can be readily dealt with. You will also be able to recognize and celebrate the incremental successes as they occur. Such recognition will help justify the expenditure of resources, reward change agents with a pat on the back, help fine-tune the strategies, undermine cynics and self-serving resisters, provide the various stakeholders with evidence that the plan is on track, and build momentum to assist in recruiting more active participation in the on-going efforts. Table 9 presents a number of questions related to the operational phase of your action plan.

Step 10 - Reporting the Results

All too often, new programs are planned, announced with great fanfare and ceremony, and never implemented as intended or, if implemented, never evaluated. They more or less seem to have a life of their own and continue to operate, whether effective or ineffective, until a new program comes along. However, the various stakeholders in schools are becoming much more suspect of new programs than in the past. If *Breaking Ranks* is going to serve as the catalyst for changing an American institution, then the results of the various efforts to implement the recommendations contained in *Breaking Ranks* will have to be reported to the various stakeholders, many of whom are reluctant to change the American high school.

The report of the action plan and the results should be clear, concise, cogent, correct, and compelling enough that it will be read, yet detailed enough to indicate how the efforts support the improvement of student learning. Briefly, this report should include:

- An overview of the action plan
- The methodology employed
- The chronology of activities
- The results of formative evaluation that occurred during the operational phase describing what was accomplished, how it occurred, and who was involved, as well as any changes or modifications made as a result of monitoring the implementation
- A discussion of the summative evaluation used to measure program effectiveness

Table 10: Questions Related to Reporting Results

Did the results of the intervention relate directly to the statement of the problem, issue, focus, emphasis, opportunity, needs, or research questions?

Were the approaches, strategies, or interventions and the benefits derived from the implementation phase of the intervention described?

Was the chronology of activities detailed?

Are you prepared to discuss the results of the implementation of your intervention?

Was each measurable outcome evaluated?

Was the program effective in achieving the designated outcomes?

Can the changes you observed be confidently attributed to the intervention?

- A summary and conclusion that not only reports the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the intervention, but any constraints on the intervention, as well as limitations on the generalizability of the results
- The implications for theory and practice.

You may believe that writing a final report is an exercise that you can forego—after all, outside of your school and community, how important is a report of your results. But, your colleagues in communities across America may well be grappling with many of the same issues that you confronted with.

Table 10 poses a number of questions that can serve as a guide in reporting the results of your intervention.

Conclusions

If you decide to become involved in the process of redefining the American high school using *Breaking Ranks* as the basis, you will be undertaking an enormous task during which you will face many obstacles and a good degree of resistance. Nonetheless, it is a task that needs to be done in every American high school if they are to prepare students to meet the changing needs of a global society.

In *Breaking Ranks* schools, principals will need to focus their efforts on severing the subservient dependence that students feel toward school officials, teachers, and the various stakeholder groups. They must be willing to step out of their comfort zones, to honestly assess their successes and failures, to aggressively collect information and ideas from others, to listen to others intently, and to view their life and work with an open mind.

Organizational change occurs over time. If the American high school is going to change, it will only do so when people's beliefs, ways of seeing the world, and ultimately their skills and capabilities change. The process of change is the result of the educational process, the very process that is the primary function of schools. Therefore, if *Breaking Ranks* is to become fully accepted as the instrument for redefining and improving secondary schools, education leaders need to ensure that the recommendations of *Breaking Ranks* become internalized and part of the lives, attitudes, beliefs, and values of all the people associated with the school. They must develop the mental habits that support lifelong learning, establish and convey the expectations, in everything they say and do, that everyone in the school community can attain the Jeffersonian ideal and a common goal the society of the twenty-first century—*E Pluribus, Una Literatorum Res Publicae.*

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